

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
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R 311108Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3157  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMCONSUL GENOA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MADRID  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES  
AMCONSUL PALERMO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 9986

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, IT  
SUBJECT: BERLINGUER ANALYZES ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTION RESULTS

SUMMARY. IN A SPEECH BEFORE AN ASSEMBLED GROUP OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) LEADERS, PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL ENRICO BERLINGUER MADE HIS FIRST FORMAL STATEMENT ON THE RESULTS OF THE LOCAL ELECTIONS WHICH SAW THE PCI SUFFER SHARP LOSSES COMPARED WITH THE RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE SAME AREAS IN THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTIONS. IN A SPIRIT OF SELF-CRITICISM, BERLINGUER REAFFIRMED THE CORRECTNESS OF THE PARTY'S PRESENT LINE OF THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE ALTHOUGH HE STRESSED THE NEED FOR REVISIONS IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THE POLICY IS IMPLEMENTED. BERLINGUER  
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URGED THE PARTY NOT TO UNDERESTIMATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ELECTORAL SETBACK, AND HE OUTLINED A VARIETY OF FACTORS WHICH HE BELIEVES CONTRIBUTED TO THE PCI'S POOR SHOWING. WE EXPECT THAT THE PCI WILL BECOME MORE AGGRESSIVE ON THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SCENE, GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE ELECTORAL RESULTS, ALTHOUGH THERE EXIST MAJOR CONSTRAINTS ON ITS ABILITY TO MANEUVER. END SUMMARY.

1. BEFORE A MAY 25 GATHERING OF PCI REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL SECRETARIES, PARTY SECRETARY BERLINGUER DELIVERED A MAJOR ADDRESS DEVOTED TO AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE RECENT LOCAL ELECTIONS (INVOLVING 10 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORATE) IN WHICH THE PCI SUFFERED A LOSS OF MORE THAN 9 PERCENT IN COMPARISON WITH THE RESULTS IT ACHIEVED IN THE SAME AREAS IN THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTIONS. BERLINGUER'S SPEECH WAS SOMBER, AND IT WAS MADE IN THE SPIRIT OF SELF-CRITICISM WHICH HAS INVESTED THE PARTY IN THE WAKE OF ONE OF ITS MOST SERIOUS ELECTORAL SETBACKS IN THE POST-WAR ERA.

2. BASIC TO BERLINGUER'S SPEECH, AND TO THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC COMMENTS OF OTHER SENIOR PCI LEADERS IN RECENT DAYS, IS THE THESIS THAT THE OVERALL PARTY LINE IS CORRECT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CHANGE. REAFFIRMING THE VALIDITY OF THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE, WHICH HE FIRST PROPOUNDED IN THE FALL OF 1973, BERLINGUER STATED THAT QUOTE WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE TO BE INTACT...THE VAILIDTY OF THE BASIC REASONS THAT INDUCED US TO PROPOSE THE STRATEGY OF THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE... END QUOTE. HE ADDED THAT QUOTE THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE EX-RESSES AND SUMS UP A GRAND DESIGN FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY AND OF THE STATE THROUGH A UNITARY AND DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT OF WHICH THE FUNDAMENTAL POPULAR FORCES ARE PROTAGONISTS: A UNITARY AND DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT THAT TENDS TO CREATE NOT A REGIME BUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A TOTALITY OF RELATIONS AND A CLIMATE...OF COLLABORATION AND SOLIDARITY: SOMETHING THAT GOES BEYOND THE FORMULA OF A GOVERNMENT THAT IS ABLE TO PERMIT A POSSIBLE CHANGE OF COURSE WITHOUT CREATING TRAUMA, RUPTURES AND BREAKS AMONG THE PEOPLE AND WITHIN THE NATION. END QUOTE. WHILE THE OVERALL STRATEGY, IN BERLINGUER'S WORDS, IS CORRECT, THE PCI LEADER CALLED FOR CHANGES TO MAKE ITS IMPLEMENTATION MORE EFFECTIVE.

3. ESSENTIALLY, BERLINGUER CALLED FOR REVISIONS IN THE DAILY TACTICS UTILIZED BY THE PCI TO WORK TOWARDS ITS GOAL OF CLOSER COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE POLITICAL FORCES AND OF EVENTUAL PARTICIPATION IN AN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. THESE WILL INVOLVE A MORE AGRESSIVE POSTURE ON THE NATIONAL, POLITICAL SCENE DESIGNED TO REALIZE THE BASIC POLICY LINE OF THE PARTY QUOTE WITH AN INCREASED MISSIONARY SPIRIT END QUOTE.

4. BERLINGUER TOLD THE ASSEMBLED PARTY LEADERS THAT IT WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE TO UNDERESTIMATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ELECTORAL SETBACK. NOTING THAT THE ELECTIONS WERE CONDUCTED IN THE EXTRAORDINARY ATMOSPHERE OF THE MORE KIDNAPPING AND ASSASSINATION, HE

DETAILED A LONG SERIES OF FACTORS WHICH  
UNDERMINED THE PARTY'S POSITIONS AND, IN THE PARTY'S  
ANALYSIS, LED TO THE DEEPLY DISAPPOINTING RESULTS. THESE  
FACTORS ARE:

- THE CHARGED POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE RESULTING FROM THE  
MORO KIDNAPPING;
- THE PCI'S RENUNCIATION OF CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT  
PARTY. IN BERLINGUER'S WORDS, QUOTE WE WERE TOO  
GENEROUS, EVEN TO THE LIMIT OF NAIVETE DURING THE LAST TWO  
MONTHS END QUOTE;
- THE QUOTE RED COLOR END QUOTE OF THE TERRORISTS CONFUSED  
THE ELECTORATE AND THE PCI FAILED TO DO ENOUGH TO DISPEL  
THIS CONFUSION;
- THE RENEWED POLITICAL ACTIVISM ON THE PART OF THE CHURCH;  
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- A FAILURE TO REACT TO THE ELECTORAL LOSSES SUFFERED IN  
THE SCATTERED LOCAL ELECTIONS OF 1977;
- THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE PCI RESPONSE TO THE COUNTER-  
OFFENSIVE BY THOSE CONCERNED BY THE MAJOR COMMUNIST ELECTORAL  
ADVANCES SCORED IN 1975 AND 1976;
- AN INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO THE PROJECTION OF THE IMAGE  
OF THE PCI AS AN AUTONOMOUS, INNOVATIVE, AND TRANSFORMATIVE  
POLITICAL PARTY;
- THE FAILURE OF THE PCI, WHICH HAD ADOPTED A POLICY OF  
AUSTERITY, TO ATTACH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DC) ACTIONS IN  
SUPPORT OF VARIOUS INTEREST GROUPS;
- THE LOSS OF DRIVE IN THE PCI'S CAMPAIGN FOR MORALITY IN  
GOVERNMENT;
- A SERIOUS ABSENCE OF PROPAGANDA IN EXPLAINING THE  
HISTORIC COMPROMISE AND THE POLICY OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY;
- A LOSS OF IDENTITY FOR THE PCI AS A RESULT OF THE POLICY  
OF NATIONAL UNITY;
- AN INADEQUATE PERFORMANCE IN CERTAIN REGIONAL AND LOCAL  
GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS BY PCI OFFICIALS;

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

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TRSE-00 OMB-01 MCT-01 /068 W

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-- AN INSUFFICIENT CHALLENGE TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS  
ON THE LOCAL LEVEL WHERE IN MANY CASES THE PARTY WAS  
PREPARED TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE DC AT ANY COST  
WITHOUT THOUGH OF THE POLITICAL PRICE;  
-- A MISJUDGEMENT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RECENT ELECTORAL  
TEST;  
-- A POOR ORGANIZATION OF THE PCI'S CONTACTS WITH THE  
ITALIAN POPULATION;  
-- AN EXCESSIVE PCI USE OF RITUALISTIC LANGUAGE IN  
CONFRONTING ISSUES; AND  
-- A NEED TO FIND THE CAPACITY TO ATTACK QUOTE THE EVILS  
OF CAPITALISM END QUOTE AND TO GIVE TESTIMONY TO THE NEW  
VALUES FOR WHICH THE PCI STANDS.

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5. BERLINGUER ANNOUNCED THAT FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF  
ADDITIONAL LOCAL ELECTIONS (MAY 28 AND 29 AFFECTING ABOUT  
100,000 VOTERS IN SICILY, AND JUNE 25 AND 26 AFFECTING AN  
ESTIMATED ONE MILLION ELECTORS IN THE REGIONS OF VALLE  
D'AOSTA AND FRIULI, VENEZIA, GIULIA) THERE WILL BE A  
CENTRAL COMMITTEE SESSION AT WHICH ALL THE ELECTION RESULTS  
WILL BE ASSESSED AND DECISIONS WILL BE TAKEN ON METHODS OF  
CORRECTING THE DEFICIENCIES IN THE PARTY'S RECENT PER-  
FORMANCE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE PCI WOULD ORGANIZE AT  
THE END OF THE YEAR A GATHERING OF COMMUNIST ADMINIS-  
TRATORS AS A MEANS OF EXAMINING THE PARTY'S PERFORMANCE IN  
GOVERNING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

6. IN REVIEWING BERLINGUER'S SPEECH, WE FOUND A CURIOUS

MENTION OF THE NEED FOR THE PARTY TO MAINTAIN A PARTICULAR CONCEPTION OF INTERNATIONALISM. IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY AMPLIFICATION OF PRECISELY WHAT HE MEANT, WE DO NOT FEEL ABLE TO COMMENT WITH ASSURANCE ON THIS ASPECT OF BERLINGUER'S ADDRESS. WE WOULD NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT SOME OBSERVERS SUGGEST THAT BERLINGUER MAY BE POINTING TO A RETURN TO INCREASED DOGMATISM ON THE IDEOLOGICAL AND INTERNATIONAL PLANE.

7. COMMENT. BASED ON THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND ON PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WE HAVE HAD, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ELECTION SETBACK SHOCKED THE PCI LEADERSHIP FOR TWO REASONS; (A) THE SIMPLE FACT THAT IT OCCURRED; AND (B) ITS MAGNITUDE. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ELECTIONS, THE PCI FINDS ITSELF ON THE HORNS OF ONE OF ITS MOST DIFFICULT DILEMMAS SINCE THE DECISIVE ELECTIONS OF 1948. IT CONTENDS THAT ITS STRATEGY IS CORRECT; BUT IT ALSO RECOGNIZES THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY IS NOT PRODUCING THE DESIRED RESULTS AND IT MUST NOW MAKE ADJUSTMENTS IN ITS TACTICS.

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8. IN PRACTICAL TERMS, THE PCI DOES NOT HAVE MUCH ROOM FOR MANEUVERING. IT HAS ALREADY RULED OUT A CHANGE IN STRATEGY, RECOGNIZING THAT A SHIFT EITHER TO THE RIGHT OR TO THE LEFT CARRIES THE RISK OF ANTAGONIZING ONE OR ANOTHER GROUP OF ITS POTENTIAL ELECTORATE. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT CAN, AT THE PRESENT TIME, POINT ONLY TO TACTICAL CHANGES. JUDGING FROM ALL INDICATIONS, THERE WILL BE TWO PRINCIPAL AREAS UPON WHICH THE PCI WILL CONCENTRATE; IT WILL BE MORE AGGRESSIVE ON BOTH THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL IN PUSHING THE DC FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PROGRAMS AND POLICIES IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS ARE INTERESTED; AND IT WILL MOBILIZE ITS PROPAGANDA MACHINERY FOR A MAJOR OFFENSIVE AIMED AT RECOVERING THE GROUND THE ELECTION RESULTS SUGGEST IT HAS LOST. CONCERNING PRESSURE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE DC, THE PCI OBVIOUSLY REALIZES THAT IN THE POST-ELECTORAL PERIOD THERE ARE LIMITS BEYOND WHICH IT CANNOT PUSH SINCE THERE IS ALWAYS THE RISK OF A RUPTURE OF THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DC WHICH COULD LEAD TO EARLY NATIONAL ELECTIONS AT A TIME WHEN THE PCI ELECTORAL PROSPECTS APPEAR TO BE DIMINISHED. THUS EVEN HERE THERE ARE MAJOR CONSTRAINTS ON THE PCI'S FREEDOM OF ACTION.

9. FINALLY, THE ELECTION RESULTS HAVE LED TO SPECULATION ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGES IN THE SENIOR LEVELS OF THE PCI APPARATUS. AS WE HAVE INDICATED IN THE PAST, WE SEE BERLINGUER'S POSITION AS SUFFICIENTLY SECURE NOT TO BE THREATENED BY A SINGLE POLITICAL SETBACK. HE HAS SHOWN HIMSELF CAPABLE OF DIRECTING CHANGES IN THE PARTY'S TACTICS (AND EVEN STRATEGY) IN THE PAST, AND WE EXPECT HIM TO BE

ABLE TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE. OBVIOUSLY, IF THE PARTY WERE  
TO UNDERGO A LONG SERIES OF SERIOUS POLITICAL REVERSES, THE  
SITUATION COULD CHANGE OVER THE LONGER TERM. REGARDING  
OTHER NATIONAL-LEVEL LEADERS, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT NO MAJOR  
SHIFTS WILL OCCUR PRIOR TO THE PARTY'S FIFTEENTH CONGRESS  
SCHEDULED FOR THE SPRING OF 1979, AT WHICH TIME WE WOULD  
NOT RULE OUT THAT SOME CHANGES IN THE LEADERSHIP WILL OCCUR.  
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FOR THE TIME BEING, THERE COULD BE SOME CHANGES ON THE  
LOCAL LEVEL, PARTICULARLY IN THOSE AREAS WHERE THE ELECTION  
RESULTS SUGGEST THAT THE PCI IS SUFFERING CONSISTENTLY  
SERIOUS POLITICAL REVERSES.GARDNER

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## Message Attributes

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**Draft Date:** 31 may 1978  
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**TAGS:** PINT, IT, (BERLINGUER, ENRICO)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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